United Nations S/2015/182

Security Council

Distr.: General
19 March 2015
English
Original: Arabic

Identical letters dated 16 March 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I should like to set out the position of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) over the period from 20 November 2014 to 3 March 2015 (S/2015/177).

- The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates that it is committed to its obligations under the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and has accordingly respected the mandate of UNDOF and facilitated its work in every way. For over four decades, for as long as Israel has occupied the Syrian Golan, the Government has cooperated and coordinated closely and fully with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UNDOF command. It therefore welcomes the fact that paragraph 30 of the report notes its assistance in facilitating the provision of essential supplies in support of the Force.

- Israel, however, has persisted under various pretexts in its repeated violations of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement, the Charter of the United Nations and Security Council resolutions, violations that are detailed in numerous paragraphs of the report. Paragraph 3 describes how, on 7 December 2014, Israel committed an aggression against the territory and sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic: Israeli warplanes bombed two civilian areas of Rif Dimashq, namely, Dimas and Damascus airport. Syria is surprised that, although the Syrian Government has provided the United Nations with detailed information in that regard, the report fails to mention Israel's numerous air violations of the Disengagement Agreement and of Syrian sovereignty. That failure has encouraged Israel to persist in its violations.

- During the current crisis in Syria, Israel has added a new chapter to the annals of its aggressions and violations by supporting *takfirist* terrorists in the area of separation in the occupied Syrian Golan. The reports of the Secretariat, including the most recent report, state that Israel has directly supported armed terrorist groups. Paragraph 5 states that during the evening of 20 January, in the area north of observation post 54, UNDOF observed two trucks crossing from the Bravo side to the Alpha side, where they were received by Israeli Army personnel. The trucks were loaded with sacks before returning to the Bravo side. On at least four occasions in February, United Nations personnel

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at observation post 54 saw vehicles, including small trucks, crossing the ceasefire line from the Bravo side and approaching the technical fence. On one such occasion, several vehicles, including some with anti-aircraft guns mounted on the back, were seen parked next to the technical fence. Those actions are a flagrant violation of the Disengagement Agreement and the Security Council counter-terrorism resolutions.

- The Syrian Arab Republic is disappointed that the Secretariat has persisted in describing the groups as "armed opposition" or "armed groups", ignoring the groups' terrorist nature. Indeed, the report itself describes the crimes committed by the terrorist groups against the personnel and property of UNDOF. Paragraph 12 states that, on 22 December 2014, personnel at observation post 54 observed a white pickup truck with an anti-aircraft gun mounted on the back that is likely to have been a stolen United Nations vehicle. Paragraph 11 states that, on 25 December, United Nations personnel at observation post 54 observed approximately 35 armed persons waving weapons in front of the observation post and firing shots into the air. We also wish to point out that the so-called Yarmouk Brigade, the terrorist group active in the Disengagement Area — which some months ago abducted Filipino peacekeepers and, along with the Nusrah Front, abducted Fijian peacekeepers — has now sworn allegiance to the terrorist organization Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

- In view of those facts, it is unacceptable that the Secretariat limits itself to stating in paragraph 28 of the report that it is critical that countries with influence continue to strongly convey to the armed groups in the UNDOF area of operations the need to cease any actions that jeopardize the safety and security of United Nations personnel. The Security Council must shoulder its responsibility to address this situation without delay in a genuine and focused manner. It must immediately take effective action against those well-known States that support the armed terrorist groups, including the Nusrah Front, in order to drive the groups from the area of separation. What is now happening in the area of separation is the inevitable result of two factors. First, the United Nations has ignored the reliable intelligence provided regularly by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the risk posed by the widespread presence of armed terrorist groups in the area of separation. Second, the United Nations has turned a blind eye to the direct support that the groups receive from Israel and certain other States.

- Mindful of its obligations, Syria has exercised the utmost restraint in responding to the activities of armed terrorist groups in the UNDOF area of operation. It understands the nature of the region and the obligations that are in force. It reiterates that the actions of Syrian law enforcement forces are a response to an emergency situation arising from exceptional circumstances, namely the terrorist activities of terrorist groups in the area of separation with support from Israel. The groups have moved freely in the area of separation, occupied Syrian territory and the area around the technical fence. They possess advanced weaponry, rocket launchers and armoured vehicles. The actions of Syrian law enforcement forces in the area of separation are the very least that the Syrian Government can do in response to appeals from the local population. The latter has borne the brunt of the terrorists' operations, which have also been directed against UNDOF and its personnel. As the report states

in numerous places, these operations have been conducted with the direct assistance of Israeli occupying forces. The report also refers to tented camps on the ceasefire line. Those camps are purportedly intended for humanitarian purposes, but are in fact logistical bases for armed terrorist groups to smuggle ammunition and supplies from occupied Syrian territory into Syria.

- The Syrian Government stresses that UNDOF must continue to fulfil its mandate within the context of Security Council resolutions and the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. Syria undertakes to continue supporting UNDOF as it has done over the years, taking into account the points made above, so that UNDOF personnel can return to their positions in the area of separation securely and in cooperation and coordination with the Syrian Government. That outcome would enable the Force to fulfil its mandate as prescribed. The Syrian Government has continued to coordinate with United Nations forces active in Syria in order to find a way for UNDOF forces to return to the area of disengagement once the terrorists in the area have been eliminated.

- The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic again emphasizes the need to address the fundamental reason for the presence of UNDOF in the region, namely the continuing Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan. It again stresses that the occupied Syrian Golan is an integral part of the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic. UNDOF is therefore present on a temporary basis until such a time as Israel's occupation of the Syrian Golan comes to an end in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 497 (1981), and Israel withdraws fully from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative